

Hasina seeks expatriates' help for a next term

BERLIN, Dec 7: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today called upon the Bangladeshi living here to help her return to power in the next election, reports UNB.

"Election is not too far and I want cooperation from all so that we can get the chance to serve the people for the next term," she said at a reception accorded to her by Bangladeshi expatriates in Germany at Hotel International on Wednesday night.

The Prime Minister, who is on a tour to three European nations lobbying for duty-and-quota-free access of Bangladeshi products to European market, said she is also discussing with European leaders about regularisation of illegal Bangladeshi living in different European countries.

"We have got positive response from them," she said amid cheers. However, she cautioned that Bangladeshi expatriates should abide by the rules and regulations of the respective countries. "You should not do anything that may tarnish the image of the country," she told the gathering.

The Prime Minister said she had talked with Italian Prime Minister and signed an agreement for legal entry of Bangladeshi people in Italy. "We do not want that our people will come in an illegal way to these countries. They will come with dignity and respect being competent in all respect."

For developing skilled manpower, she said, her government has given enormous emphasis on computer education and science and technology education in the country and has waived taxes on the import of computer and computer equipment.

She said the government has taken steps for establishing connection with submarine

cables and for setting up 12 science and technology universities in the country.

About the BNP-led oust-government movement, Hasina said the "parties of Khaleda, Ershad and Golam Azam and also the Islami Oikya Jote have got together to remove her government which, she said, is working day and night for the welfare of the people."

"We are working for the people and will continue to do so. We have successfully faced natural calamities and man-made disasters."

Responding to the demand of Bangladeshi expatriates, Hasina said the government is trying to solve the problems at Dhaka International Airport. "We have arrested the culprits and taken measures to stop harassment of homebound passengers."

About expatriates' right to franchise, she said this requires the support of two-thirds majority in Parliament to bring about fundamental changes in the constitution.

"We have requested the Election Commission and Foreign Ministry to work out a plan for realising this demand," she said and asked the Bangladeshi expatriates to enrol themselves as voters whenever they go to Bangladesh.

The meeting was addressed, among others, by State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury, former Chhatra League president Enamul Huq Shamim, and AL's German unit leaders Anwarul Islam Ratan, Kazi Abdul Matin, Abdul Quayum Manik and Berlin Parliament Member Dr Harman Fargos. All European AL Chairmen Anil Das Gupta presided.



Children of martyred intellectuals formed a human chain by handcuffing themselves in front of the National Press Club yesterday.

- Star photo

PM for cut in drip-feed

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Seeking more investment from Germany she said increased investment from abroad would spur economic activity that will bring about much-needed economic growth and stability.

Presently direct German investment in the country is not encouraging as available figures show it to be around \$20 million to \$30 million.

Hasina said the government has offered lucrative incentives to attract more investment in Bangladesh. These include tax holiday for 5 years, repatriation of invested capital and profits, working capital loans from local banks for foreign investors, tax exemption of different categories, remittance of up to 50 per cent of salary of foreign technicians and no duty on imported machinery for 100 per cent export-oriented industries.

In response to various queries by Hamburg businessmen about red tape, corruption, problems in ports and load shedding that slow down foreign investment, the Prime Minister said her government is aware of the shortcomings and is working hard to remove all problems creating an investment-friendly climate in Bangladesh.

"We've overcome many obstacles, democracy has been restored, political situation is improving, many reforms were made... come and invest to help us develop our country," Hasina told the seminar.

She said military rule for over two decades bred corruption and irregularities. "But if you come today, I am sure you will find lot of changes. Things are changing towards the right direction."

The Prime Minister said Bangladesh is a densely populated small country. After assuming power, present government has taken a strict stand for improving law-and-order situation. The incidence of crimes has come down.

Explaining investment policy of the government she said Bangladesh is one of the most open economies in the developing world. The policy allows repatriation of profits, foreign ownership virtually without limit, generous tax-breaks, residency permits for foreign experts etc.

Hasina described Germany as a major development partner and Bangladesh's export destination, saying that over the years Germany provided Bangladesh with development assistance, food aid

and disaster relief.

German development aid in the past has been mainly in the fields of poverty alleviation, energy, railway, industry and agriculture, human resources and development of women, promotion of private-sector industries, infrastructure development, environment and cyclone-protection.

Chairman of Asia-Pacific Business Association Peter Clasen and President of Hamburg Chamber of Commerce Nikolus Schues also addressed the seminar focused on Bangladesh's present spectrum.

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